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EDITORIAL NOTES

Teachers are too much concerned with unessential details. They asphyxiate themselves and the pupils with the minutiae of technique and with the infinitesimal divisions of subject-matter. Expression through language barely begins, when the thought that inspired it is drowned by a multiplicity of irrelevant facts relating to form; forthwith the emphasis goes to "language as such" !

With the first note of song begin the hammer and bang of drill upon meaningless symbols, standing for musicless sounds that give no voice to the melody in the soul.

Pictures of light, of color, and of form are imprisoned within by the barriers of technique; and while life is harrassed and wasted upon the barren mechanics of brush and pencil and paper, the pictures shrivel and dry, and forever fade from the face of the artistic imagination. This, all that there may be "art for art's sake."

The slow germination of thinking about the proportions and the relations of things is scarcely started, when technical processes, with shadowless symbols divert the mind from its natural channels, and endless drill finally results in permanent impairment of original mathematical power. That vision through the evolution of which the mind might have the means to clarify the world around about it, through the chatter of formulæ, becomes confused and uncertain, and the primeval chaos of the world remains with us as with the savage.

There is hardly a subject in the curriculum where thought is not hampered, stultified, and often obliterated through the efforts to enforce technique. And the greatest sinners are the technicians themselves. They thrust their own refined method upon their pupils, whether they be in the university, the secondary or the elementary school, appar-

**The Chief
Offenders**

ently forgetful of the conditions under which they themselves acquired it — if, indeed, they have ever done aught but copy from another.

The technique of a subject is the easiest part about it. The natural relations of process and method to thought are such, that

Technique the	it is doubtful if any normal individual actually pos-
Outcome of	sessed of a clear idea ever failed because he could
Thought	not give it appropriate form through expression.

The reason why we cannot draw is that we do not get the image which it is the province of a drawing to represent. Our

Why Failures	pencil stops precisely where our seeing fails. Any-
in Technique	one can trace with a pencil or brush the outlines of a
	figure already drawn; there is no reason why he
	should not trace the same lines without the presence of the picture
	except in the fact that the mental image is missing.

It is not more difficult from the motor side to model a vase or even a human figure than it is to spread a slice of bread with butter and then eat it. By some mistake, certainly, the latter process, to date, has escaped the keen vision of the technician and we have learned how to eat in peace. When the drill-master discovers the oversight, folks who eat will probably become as rare as sculptors.

Not that people become technically correct all at once, nor can it be denied that there is necessity for the education of the nerves

How Train for	and muscles; but "the soul is the thing" which
Technique	determines the correctness and the ease with which
	the training may be acquired. Teachers who would
	train pupils in writing start at the wrong place when they begin
	with the arm movement, and, to train in speech, they have some-
	thing to do besides watching the glottis.

In spite of the struggle for form, it is seldom that the results are satisfactory, and pupils give up the striving with feelings of

Discourage-	relief from the intolerable grind. Language, art,
ment of the	music, dramatics, writing, spelling, and mathematics
Pupils	all appear to stand as obstacles in the way of what
	the pupils would be rather than as the direct means thereto. It is

only when one becomes inspired with his own message that, freed from the drudgery of drill, he turns to these forms of expression and, selecting the one most natural and effective, delivers himself through a technique of his own. One utterance giving voice or form to something that must be said — something that must take shape lest the world suffer — will do more for technique than all the “formal grammar,” “formal arithmetic,” “formal art,” and “formal everything else” that can be crammed into the years of school life.

We are just finding out that a child should “be himself” when he talks, but the discovery has gone little farther. It is, however, **Pupil's Right to His Own Technique** also true that he should give himself forth in song as in speech; in art forms as well as in writing; in poetry, too, when his inspired thought strikes the octave. The results attained justify no further waste of years in trying to make the pupil absorb a literary style from someone who wrote a “masterpiece”—a style for which the pupil has no thoughts to fit. When the notation of their own melodies that naturally grow just because children find things beautiful, good, and harmonious, take the place of the note-chasing that is now down on the program as “music”—save the mark—we shall find that our soil, too, will produce musicians.

What is the trouble? Too much of littleness, of narrowness — too many minutiae! Breadth, breadth, breadth, is needed!

What's the Remedy? More superficiality; less thoroughness! Greater appreciation of huge crudities; less complacency with finicky niceties! More sympathy with movement; less emphasis upon sand-papered results! More attention to the pupil's power of original thinking; less stress upon his ability to copy! (The only original researcher is the child under school age; then he selects his subject and treats it at will. As a postgraduate, his topic is usually assigned, and he generally copies his method.) Less worry about what the pupil can say; more interest in what he can do! Smaller regard for what he knows; increased esteem for his influence! Less exacting as to obedience; a more careful nurture of personal responsibility! Not such

assiduous industry with the "muckrake;" some contemplation of the "crown" overhead!

W. S. J.

Two articles appear in the pages of this number of the *Elementary School Teacher* descriptive of experiments in education:

Educational Experiments one a prospect merely, and the other a review of an institution which is long past the experimental stage, and yet is still spoken of by many in tones which prophesy a defeat of which the school has never yet given the slightest signs of verification. Both the farm school sketched by Mrs. Hill and the unique English school, Bedales, will probably fall under the stricture laid upon another attempt to make a school conform to an ideal in education, by a public-school man who said of the school in question: "Frankly, I do not like your school. It is doing what we never can do under our public-school conditions. Such a school can never be thrown open to any but the favored few. Ideal, I confess it to be, but an ideal that never can be realized for the masses. Your equipment, space, and small classes furnish conditions that the public can never afford." Similar objections are likely to arise in the minds of the readers as they peruse the articles referred to.

It is a serious objection. The very depth of bitterness with which we hear it uttered indicates a corresponding keenness of sympathy for the needs and problems of the public schools which are first and last the chief concern of all of us. If it were not for that concern, some of these experimental stations would not exist. They should bear the same relation to the pressing needs of the big public-school system that the agricultural experiment stations do to the farming communities. The experimenter has a fund wherewith to work out his hypothesis. He has apparatus and time to devote to these objects alone. He finds, we will say, that by the cultivation of certain colonies of bacteria as nodules on leguminous plants his bacteria greatly increase the nitrogen-appropriating power of the plants. Success assured, the information and the materials are at

the disposal of the farmers, the latter delivered ready for use like so many precious yeast-cakes.

The farmers working under pressure which precludes the full experimental use of their powers still are the gainers by the experiment of the specialist. The skilful and progressive farmer returns his report and practical suggestions from the field to the station. Just so the teacher whose hands are tied, comparatively, by her scanty appropriation for materials, and her large classes of children, cannot rush into work demanding apparatus and freedom until she sees clearly where the work will lead; what it means in power, in enrichment of the lives of her children. But these points proved and her own soul convinced, there is always a way of convincing those who can aid in changing the conditions under which she works.

There was once a young man who was taken in by the manager of a large factory to be trained up in the business. He was the son of one of the officers of the company. The young man went rapidly from one division to the next. At last, after working successively as an ordinary workman in the sifting, weighing, mixing, molding, and baking rooms, he was given charge of a room. He soon saw a chance to improve methods and lessen labor, having been himself brought up in those schools (beginning with the kindergarten) that develop initiative. He reported his plan to the manager, and was permitted to make the necessary changes, which, of course, involved the learning of new ways by the workmen. Soon another discovery was made, all in the line of progress, and another permission and another reconstruction followed in due order. A third proposition came up to the manager involving extensive changes in machinery and operation. This the manager vetoed, arguing that the loss of time, expense of changes, and friction in getting the workmen adjusted to new habits would overbalance the economic advantage of the proposed improvement.

Just as in the machine known as manufactory, so in the social machine of public school, there is such interlacing and interlocking of parts and functions that each change comes hard, and the managers fear the overthrow while really indorsing the idea involved. Changes involving the reduction of numbers, special training of teachers, and installation of tools have to come when the utility and eventual economy of these things have been established in a smaller and freer institution. So, while welcoming criticism and modification, let us not declare at the outset that these experimental schools and schemes are useless or worse than useless because we cannot at once see the possibility of making them contribute to the education of every child in the public schools. There never was an ideal realized that was not at one stage of the game stamped "utopian." The whole mighty advance from passive to active education has been in the face of obstacles generally pronounced "utopian," fifteen years ago.

In this very idea carried out in one way at Bedales, to be carried out in another at Wheeling, in another at the George Junior Republic, and in other ways in half a dozen schools we might mention, there are a few fundamental propositions: that real work may be made a stimulus to scientific study; that the community of working, playing, and learning individuals, both children and adults is the most normal school, ethically and intellectually, and certainly physically; that such a school will not only conduce to mental and physical health, but will in a very practical way offer a new force to stem the tide of concentration in cities by offering interests and control in country pursuits; to refute the doctrine that these ideals are impossible of realization, save under certain specified conditions to be had only in private enterprises with private funds, we quote a few instances: the gardening at homes and schools, of Dayton, Ohio; the garden of the Drummond Vacation School, of Chicago; the gardens of the Chicago Bureau of Charities on outlying vacant tracts; the gardens in that most crowded modern city of Berlin, lying in a new part of the

city where the paterfamilias takes his family of a Sunday afternoon, to work, and to eat under their own vine and fig tree; the many, many school gardens that are being conducted with intellectual profit, and some remuneration, in towns and cities and in country districts. All go to show that, given the great appreciation of a demonstrated good, there is more than one mode of realization.

B. P.